



Doves of South Carolina - Identification and Status



The following characteristics may be used in identifying these species:

Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*):

Description:

- Length: 10.5 inches
- Sexes similar
- Medium-sized, slender with very thin neck
- Black bill
- Feeds on grass seed and waste grain
- Distinct pointed tail

Distribution: Statewide - most abundant in agricultural settings.

Legal Status – Game Bird: Seasons set annually. Daily aggregate bag limit for mourning doves and white-winged doves is 15.



White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*):

Description:

- Length: 10 inches
- Sexes similar
- Adult similar to juvenile
- Large, chunky dove
- Fairly long, black bill
- Pale blue, teardrop-shaped orbital ring to eye
- Pale gray-brown head, neck, back, belly and upperwings, with darker brown primaries
- Long dark mark on lower face below eye
- Purplish iridescence on neck
- Bold white wing patch, visible at rest, formed by pale secondary coverts
- Long tail is slightly rounded at tip
- Dark brown tail with white corners bordered above by black line

Distribution: Southwest U.S.,TX, Gulf Coast States to Florida – uncommon visitor to South Carolina.

Legal Status – Game Bird: Seasons set annually. Daily aggregate bag limit for mourning doves and white-winged doves is 15.



Eurasian Collared Doves (*Streptopelia decaocto*):

Description:

- Length: 12 inches
- Sexes similar
- Pale gray head and underparts
- Thin black collar with white upper border
- Gray upperparts
- Dark primaries
- Long, squared tail-undersurface with black base and white tip; upper surface gray with white outer tips
- Established in southern Florida and expanding northward

Distribution: Throughout South Carolina – most common in outer coastal plain, but locally abundant throughout state.

Legal Status - Unprotected: May be harvested along with mourning doves and white-winged doves, but does not count in daily bag limit.



Rock Dove, Rock Pigeon or Common Pigeon (*Columba livia*):

Description:

- Length: 12-14 inches
- Sexes similar
- Color variable; most are bluish-gray with black bands on wings and a black tip to the tail
- Wings broad but pointed
- Gray-black bill

Distribution: Statewide – common in cities, towns, around grain bins and cattle feed lots.

Legal Status – Unprotected: May be harvested along with mourning doves and white-winged doves, but does not count in daily bag limit.



Common Ground Dove (*Columbina passerina*):

Description:

- Length: 5.5 inches
- Sexes similar
- Small, chunky dove
- Black-tipped orange bill
- Gray-brown back and upperwings
- Scaly appearance to breast and head
- Black spotting on wing coverts
- Cinnamon inner webs of primaries visible in flight and occasionally at rest
- Cinnamon wing linings
- Short tail is slightly rounded at tip
- Tail is brown centrally, with black edges and white corners

Distribution: Throughout coastal plain – most common in outer coastal plain. Rarely in Piedmont.

Legal Status – Protected non-game: May not be harvested.



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